



German firefighters carry a simulated victim from the site of an explosion involving a release of chemical gas during force protection exercise Spring Fox '07 in Hohenfels, Germany, March 10. U.S. Army Garrison Hohenfels conducted the exercise, which involved approximately 40 role players and more than 200 host-nation emergency responders.

Annual exercise hones crisis response capability

HOHENFELS, Germany— Sirens, bullhorns and the squeal of radio feedback echoed through the center of U.S. Army Garrison, Hohenfels, Saturday morning as Spring Fox '07, the post's annual force protection exercise, transformed the quiet streets into a teeming crisis response site.

Capt. Derek Wilson, USAG Hohenfels provost marshal, described the overall scenario, which started at about 9 a.m.

“There was a simulated explosion on post,” he said. “The initial two military police patrols secured the scene. Then the German fire department arrived and I arrived as the onsite commander. Our job then was to provide a cordon, keep the area safe and prevent people from coming in. Once the host nation law enforcement authorities arrive, it’s their show and we provide support.”

German police and firefighters took charge of the scene, determined the extent of the damage and injuries and worked with German Red Cross members to evacuate and treat “victims.”

Meanwhile, German and military police quickly determined that the “explosion” was caused by improperly discarded ammunition. Military working dog teams checked the area for secondary explosives and found none. Shortly after noon, the German and U.S. authorities agreed there was no further imminent danger.

Lt. Col. James V. Matheson, U. S. Army Garrison Hohenfels commander, said host nation support is key to emergency response in the garrison.

“We get wonderful cooperation from our Bavarian hosts,” he said. “We have over 250 local national first responders here today ... we couldn’t ask for any better from our host nation.”

Petra Boxhorn was part of a German Red Cross team that applied moulage (mock injuries) to the “victims,” served as role players and also observed the exercise.

“This is important to us to train,” she said. “We also do an exercise like this every year, and it helps us to prepare for accidents, or things that happen on the street every day.”

Command Sgt. Maj. Donald L. Battle said Spring Fox '07 highlighted the cooperation between USAG Hohenfels residents and local German authorities.

“Hohenfels is a close-knit family. You know all the people in the neighborhood, in the surrounding communities. We have a close working relationship,” he said. “And the troops and the leadership here are very involved; you can see that by their participation today. You can see the caliber of troops we have here. They consistently train, and they did an outstanding job today.”

Bob Balcerzak, an antiterrorism specialist for U.S. Army, Europe’s operations directorate, led the evaluation team overseeing the exercise. He said the scenario achieved what the annual exercises, mandatory for all garrisons, are designed to do: stress the system, and create conditions that require robust host nation response.

“We’ve accomplished what we set out to accomplish,” he said. “The important thing is getting everybody in the right place in the right time to get us through a crisis situation.”

Balcerzak added that the exercises, along with the regular planning each IMCOM-Europe garrison conducts with host nation authorities, ensure communities can respond effectively in an emergency.

“Our ability to respond jointly with the host nation is at a high standard. It is these exercises that allow us to continue to hone those response skills even more,” he said.



During force protection exercise Spring Fox '07 in Hohenfels, Germany, March 10, simulated victims rush a German firefighter responding to a reported explosion in the SORT facility, near the hazardous materials storage area, which triggered a release of chemical agents. U.S. Army Garrison Hohenfels conducted the exercise, which involved approximately 40 role players and more than 200 host-nation emergency responders.